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POLAND: Food Shortages Ahead

The regime probably will be able to maintain food supplies at current levels for the rest of this year, but some shortages of meat, grain products, and vegetable oil are likely early next year.

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The above-average grain harvest of 21 million tons this year is about 4 million tons below anticipated requirements for 1983. The regime does not have the money or credit to fill the gap with Western imports as it has in the past, and it has thus far procured from farmers only about 46 percent of the 5 million tons planned to be available for human consumption.

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Production of other food and fodder crops has been poor. The harvest of potatoes--an important livestock feed--is 25 percent below last year. The sugar beet crop is about 15 percent lower.

[REDACTED]

Comment: The poor fodder harvest and the high cost of feedgrain in private markets has led to distress slaughtering--including breeding stock and young animals--which will cause greater meat shortages by early 1983. Shortages of grain products also seem likely, because the Poles probably will import only about 2-2.5 million tons of grain. This will include about 500,000 tons from other East European countries and the USSR.

[REDACTED]

The Poles are trying to arrange barter deals. They will use some of the short-term credits to be provided as part of the bank rescheduling agreement in 1982 to buy grain in the US. The food shortages, combined with higher prices and lower quality, will increase consumer resentment.

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